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WILLIAM GREENE BINNEY

BY ARTHUR F. GRAY

William Greene Binney was born at Boston, Mass., Oct. 22, 1833. The home of his parents was then at 62 Mt. Vernon St. He was the son of Dr. Amos Binney and Mary Ann (Binney) Binney. He was a descendant in the seventh generation from Capt. John Binney of Hull, Mass., 1678-9, fisherman and gentleman, the ancestor of almost all of the name in America. He died there on Nov. 10, 1698; his widow, Mercy, also died in Hull, Jan. 19, 1708-9.

His father Dr. Amos Binney, 1803-1847, was one of the founders of the Boston Society of Natural History, in 1830, its President for four years, and served the society also as Treasurer and Curator. Dr. Binney accumulated an extensive and valuable library on natural history subjects, a large portion of which is now lodged in the library of the Society. During an all too brief life, he gave particular attention to the study of the terrestrial air-breathing mollusks of the United States, he prepared materials and had many fine copper-plates executed for a work on the subject; the results of these studies were afterwards published in three quarto volumes in a monumental form, posthumously, under the able editorship of Dr. Augustus A. Gould.

Binney's early schooling was obtained in the Boston Public Schools and in 1850, at the age of seventeen, he entered Harvard College. Never of a strong constitution, he was obliged to leave college before the time for graduation, on account of continued ill health; however, he returned after an interval, took up his studies and received in 1857 his de-

gree A.B. as of the class of 1854. In 1884 Harvard conferred on him the honorary degree of A.M.

From his father William G. Binney seems to have inherited his taste for natural history, more especially for conchology, and as for many years he remained a semi-invalid, he devoted much time to a close and intimate study of our American land shells, though to a lesser extent he studied some of our fresh-water groups and wrote valuable and much used papers relating thereto (No. 32, 34 and others in the appended bibliography). He carried on his researches with great persistence and care and many of his papers on the lingual dentition, jaws and genitalia of our land and fresh-water shells, are monuments to his patience and skill, not only as a biologist but also as a skilful draughtsman. Thus he carried on his lines of research, following in a very thorough manner the line laid out and so ably started by his father.

We find him publishing papers on various conchological subjects as early as 1856; during the year he also edited "Descriptions of Terrestrial Shells of North American, by Thomas Say", in which all of Say's scattered and generally inaccessible papers relating to our terrestrial species were first brought together. In 1858, he brought forth "The Complete Writings of Thomas Say on Conchology of the United States", this he edited and published in an octavo volume of 252 pages, and reproduced all of Say's plates, some 75 in number, from the original coppers. In 1859 he issued as Volume IV, a supplement to the well-known work of his father on the Terrestrial Air-breathing Mollusks of the United States, some 207 pages, with six colored plates; again in 1878, he published at Cambridge as Volume V, of the same, in 449 pages, with 104 plates and 312 wood-cuts, a most complete and full account of our land Mollusca. Still later and at various dates he issued four supplements to his last volume.

In 1863-4 an important work entitled "Bibliography of North American Conchology, Previous to 1860", appeared from his pen. It was published in two parts, American

Authors and Foreign Authors. In its 956 pages it listed all writers of papers, also gave lists of all species described in them. In 1864, he edited, with George W. Tryon, Jr., "The Complete Writings of Constantine Smaltz Rafinesque on Recent and Fossil Conchology". In 1869, with Thomas Bland, "Land and Fresh-water Shells of North America: Part I, Pulmonata Geophila" appeared, and in 1865 Part II, on the "Fresh-water Shells" by Binney, these highly important publications forming part of the series on the land and fresh-water shells issued by the Smithsonian Institution. All were fully illustrated with wood-cuts.

In 1870 at the request of the Massachusetts Legislature he edited as a Second Edition of Gould's "Report on the Invertebrata of Massachusetts", his well-known "Invertebrata of Massachusetts", an important contribution of 524 pages, with 12 plates and 756 wood-cuts. The latter were engraved from drawings made by the late Prof. Edward S. Morse.

Still later, in 1885, "A Manual of American Land Shells" by him came from the press. This was issued as Bulletin No. 28, by the United States National Museum.

His more important publications are given above, yet he found time to produce a large number of important papers on Mollusca which appeared in the publications of our scientific societies, at comparatively frequent intervals.

For over thirty years he enjoyed a close intimacy with Mr. Thomas Bland with whom he worked and became closely associated. Mr. Bland's intimate knowledge of the land shells of the West Indies and their geographical distribution, gained during his residence in Barbadoes and Jamaica, covering a period of ten years or more, besides a world-wide correspondence with all the important workers both in Europe and America upon that subject, especially fitted him as a mutual friend and co-worker. During their association under joint-authorship some twenty-five papers and books were published. The relationship thus formed was of mutual value to both and continued until Mr. Bland's death in August, 1885.

Mr. Binney also corresponded with nearly all of the active collectors of land shells in North and Central America, as well as many foreign authors, collectors and museums from whom he received many new, undescribed, or little-known species. He published descriptions of many of these, more particularly those belonging to the North American fauna.

Mr. Binney was a member of the principal scientific societies both here and abroad. The inclemency of the weather in Boston forced him to seek a milder climate. Accordingly he visited France, and resided in Paris for two or three years after giving up his work at Harvard. He was married at the American Embassy in that city, March 20, 1855, to Miss Marie Louise Chamberlain, daughter of Judge William Chamberlain of Philadelphia, a brilliant and highly accomplished lady, with whom he lived to celebrate his golden wedding. After his return from Europe, he took up his residence at Burlington, N. J., where his valued contributions to conchology were produced and where he passed away August 3, 1909. His remains with those of his wife, rest in the lot of his father in Mt. Auburn, she having died the year previous. They were survived by their two daughters, Mrs. Frank W. Earl (Marie Binney), of Burlington, N. J., and the Princess Pietro Paulo di Camporeale (Florence Ethel Binney), of Rome, Italy, where she has resided since her marriage in 1888.

The writer enjoyed an intimate and lengthy acquaintance with Mr. Binney from 1876 till he ceased his work on the land shells, and had the privilege of supplying drawings of many shells for his works. A large portion of Binney's library is now in his possession.

Binney's frequent visits to Europe, gave him access to the many foreign museums and art galleries, and he inherited not only the love of nature but that of art from his father. He was a brilliant linguist, speaking the French and Italian tongues fluently, an excellent Latin scholar, a most genial and kindly gentleman, always interested in the younger workers in his favorite branch, giving freely of his time and kindly advice to those who came to him or choose to write

him. In his death America lost one of its most careful and accomplished conchologists.

The bibliography which will appear in the next number of NAUTILUS, while possibly incomplete, shows the extent and value of his services. I trust it may prove of use to searchers for his writings.

SOME CONCHOLOGICAL BEGINNINGS

BY CALVIN GOODRICH

One cannot do the necessarily repeated readings of early descriptions of fresh water mollusks in America without coming to wonder what manner of men did the original collecting, the circumstances of this collecting and, sometimes, where exactly the collections were made. Gradually, one picks up a certain amount of dependable information on the subject. A realization develops of how exceedingly restricted were the means of travel in the first fifty or sixty years of the Nineteenth Century. Customs that are now almost forgotten are revealed. Errors get themselves resolved some way. Probably more than anything else which leaves an impression is that collecting was carried on, in large part, as casually and spasmodically as the school teacher abroad gathers together her impedimenta of souvenirs.

In an incomplete list of names taken from Lea's "Observations" are those of thirteen doctors, only four of whom appear to have been collectors in the strict sense. The others pocketed a few shells as the things met their eyes, and by avenues more or less devious these shells reached Isaac Lea. This is probably why so many of Lea's types are "dead" specimens. The doctor of that day, if he lived west of the eastern seaboard or in the south, was compelled to go about on horseback. He was compelled, too, to hunt for fords, to halt at ferries, to wait with such patience as he had while floods subsided and permitted the resumption of travel. Such